

DOTAGE.

A

P O E M,

Inscrib'd to a Gentleman within a few
Years of his Grand-Climacterick.

Fortior est qui se, quam qui fortissima vincit
Mænia. Virg.

Non cogo, non impero, sed propono palmam, præ-
mia ostendo. St. Jerom.

By J. W.

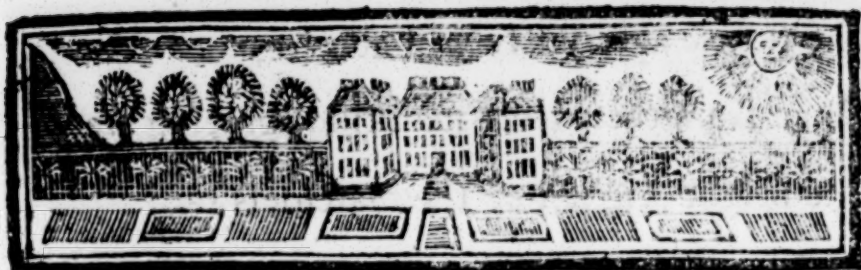


L O N D O N:

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DOTAGE.



ULL five and fifty winters o'er
(thy head,

Well thou resolv'st to mount
(the nuptial bed.

Too long a lonely joyless state
(you've try'd,

Take to your arms, at last, the blooming bride.

While vigour yet remains your sinews prove,

In warm embraces of unspotted love.

So may you well preserve a glorious name,

And to posterity transmit your fame.

An off-spring, sure, of such a virtuous fire
The future ages justly will admire,
When from their lives mankind agreeing trace
The bright orig'nal of the matchless race.

How few the marriage rites so long decline !
The institution is itself divine.
The wise Creator, all things else being done,
Saw 'twas not good for man to be alone.
Possess'd of all the sweets of life beside,
What was that *something* wanting but a bride?
This Prov'dence knew, tho' plac'd in Paradise,
And gave him woman to compleat his bliss.
Woman! the last, most perfect work of heav'n,
Was as an help-meet and a comfort giv'n.
Adam astonish'd view'd the heav'nly maid,
While joys extatick ev'ry sense invade.
If not restrain'd, idolatry the first sin
Had then, instead of disobedience, been ;

For

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For on his knees he was about t'adore
The lovely gift, as some immortal pow'r,

Such was our beauteous mother ! such we find,
The fates, to grace your nuptials, have design'd.
The choice you've made ev'n envy must commend,
And with yourself, you pleasure ev'ry friend.
Still rising in her bloom the nymph appears,
An irresistible charm her beauty wears.

No wonder then that she your blood could fire,
Who fills the world with tumults of desire.
If thus, so young ! she charms our wond'ring sight,
How will she ravish at meridian height !

Defer not then a moment of your joy,
Consideration may your love destroy.
Rush on at once, lest resolutions cool,
Nor leave her to some undeserving fool.
Rush on at once, explore the latent bliss,
And drink whole draughts of *Nectar* in a kiss.

Soft

Soft melting scenes of exquisite delight !
Must fire your fancy, and your soul excite !
Strugling as in the agonies of death,
She'll heaving wreath your waste and pant for breath.
Run headlong to your heav'n, without delay,
Remember youth and beauty leads the way.
E'er she imbibes the arts of all her sex,
Now to encourage, and anon perplex,
To feign a softness and destructive smile,
While yet her mind's unpractis'd to beguile,
Take her thus green, and teach her how to love,
Train'd by your care, she daily must improve.
What inexpressive joys you'll find, to see
Her pliant to each wish you'd have her be ?
Howe'er the match may be unequal thought,
Examples to approve it may be brought :
David and *Solomon* had youthful brides,
When full of years, to warm their aged sides.

But

But tho', my friend, t'advise I thus proceed,
 Are there no reasons to forbid the deed?
 I'll should I act that part which I profess
 Were I to counsel 'gainst your happiness.
 Be frank and open, since I am so free,
 And your design in this reveal to me.
 The end doth good or bad denominate
 Each action whichfoe'er we perpetrate;
 The self-same fact or good or bad we find,
 According to the view wherewith design'd.
 You know the causes for which that blest state
 Was first ordain'd, which causes should have weight.
 Not lightly we, nor wantonly should wed,
 And heedlessly prefer the nuptial bed,
 To satisfy our carnal lusts, like beasts
 Devoid of reason; but our nobler breasts
 Should animated be with nobler fires;
 And as we differ, so should our desires.

Why

Why should I tell what you're no stranger to?
 But 'tis thro' tenderness and care for you.
 I not pretend to teach, but that the more
 You may reflect on what you knew before:
 'Tis what yourself I've often heard to say,
 And your own rules I to yourself display.
 Quick to advise we're ever fondly prone,
 But cherish faults when they become our own;
 Another's mote we easily discern,
 T' our grosser errors blind, and still to learn.
 " * Look round the habitable world, how few
 " Know their own good, or knowing it, pursue.
 " How void of reason are our hopes and fears!
 " What in the conduct of our life appears
 " So well design'd, so luckily begun,
 " But, when we have our wish, we wish undone.

* *Juvenal by Dryden.*

Marriage for procreation of mankind,
 Prime cause, by heaven was at first design'd.
 In you the vig'rous sap of life is gone,
 Scarce can you hope the blessing of a son ;
 Therefore for this 'tis folly to pursue
 The fancy'd happiness you have in view.

And next the institution was decreed,
 That, fir'd with lust, we virtuous lives might lead ;
 That men incontinent might, in that state,
 Preserve their bodies incontaminate ;
 And that it might to such frail persons prove
 A friendly remedy 'gainst sinful love.
 But you who've long the paths of virtue trod,
 And ev'ry soft temptation yet withstood,
 Can you not arm yourself, and persevere,
 Now the same soft destructive danger's near ?

Or was your former valour all a boast,
Or did your eye ne'er glance upon a *Toast*,
That at first sight you could be won and lost?
What merit is there if we virtuous are,
And in the practise rigidly sincere,
When to the contrary there's neither cause,
Nor strong temptation, which our passion draws?
Sure self-denial ever was defin'd
The noblest virtue that could grace mankind.
And he, who upon trial shou'd, supine,
The exercise as difficult decline,
Acts like the soldier, who of's courage vaunts
In time of peace, in day of battle faints.
What honour such a Hero must obtain
Is easy to determine and explain.
But he who can't from this vile vice refrain
Deserves the name of brute, but not of man:
Tho' chastity's th' immediate gift of heav'n,
Let us but ask it, 'twill be surely giv'n.

Lastly,

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Lastly, the mystick union was ordain'd
(The sweetest end for which we cou'd be chain'd)
For mutual solace and society,
To share in joys and calm anxiety.
Without a partner to partake our joys
The o'er-charg'd blessing soon our blifs destroys.
Ev'n sharpest pains would ineffectual prove,
Embossom'd in the breast of one we love ;
Their force enervate, lessen ev'ry care,
When, in the least, lamented by the fair.
The greatest griefs to pleasures it beguiles,
When beauteous *Laura* in her softness smiles.
Methinks for ever I thro' meads could walk,
And hear the moving charmer fondly talk ;
Whole ages spend in conversation blest,
With her dear head reclin'd upon my breast.
Cornelia thus the warrior's soul cou'd melt,
Those well know how, who have the pleasures felt!

Nay, even *nothing* can with raptures move,
 And silence may be eloquence in love.
 None but a lover can the sense conceive;
 What means my bosom at the thought to heave?
 Cease, throbbing heart, thy soft emotions cease,
 I'm busy now — pray, let me be at peace.
 No language can the tender sense express,
 Which repetition only renders less.
 The most indiff'rent things to lovers prove
 Highest incentives to endearing love.
 Extatick joys! resembling those above!

Come on, my friend, if this be your design,
 I mix my friendly wishes close with thine.
 Such a sweet match what mortal can refuse?
 “ For who would so much satisfaction lose?
 With youth, with beauty, and with wit possess,
 In such perfection! you'll be triply blest!

But

But virtue yet should ever be the main
 Consideration in th' advent'ring swain;
 All other fine advantages, indeed,
 We must allow, are moving charms to wed;
 But not enough substantial, Sages own,
 To build a lasting happiness upon.
 Nor yet on virtue 'tself shou'd we rely,
 That narrow notion of mere chastity,
 Which now is all, amidst such tempting scenes,
 The world by virtue in a woman means;
 Whereas the truth, were it but justly known,
 And the degrees of virtue clearly shown,
 Unless, as never-erring wisdom tells,
 In all the moral virtues she excells,
 And those perfections be with goodness crown'd,
 And true religion gloriously abound,
 We justly can no person virtuous name;
 A tree is chaste, yet cannot virtue claim:

And

And as no woman, of these unpossess,
Deserves the title of a virtuous breast,
So where they're wanting man can ne'er be blest.
Favour's deceitful, greatest beauty vain,
But she that fears the Lord shall praise obtain.

Not that I can the least objection make
To this fair charmer you're about to take;
Do not too rashly my advice mistake.
'Tis not to cast a blemish on the fair,
That I so openly my mind declare,
Urg'd by my tenderness, e'er you proceed
I'd have you weigh deliberately the deed;
For certainly in all th' affairs of life,
The weightiest is the chusing of a wife.
We wed not for a day, a month, a year,
When once 'tis done, we never can get clear,
Till ghastly death the gordian knot unties,
And puts an end to joys and miseries.

And

And oh! how ill do youth and age agree!
 Unequal matches may breed jealousy,
 The rage of man; wherever it infects
 No scorpion can so much torment our breasts!
 We then alas! tho' hide it we wou'd fain,
 Interpret ev'ry action to our pain.
 Each look, each smile, each gesture's falsely thought
 Some invitation, and egregious fault.
 Those winning graces which were wont to charm,
 Now give us anguish and our cares alarm.
 Strangers to peace of mind each drags a life
 Of contradiction and perpetual Strife.
 Perplex'd with such continual wrangling jars,
 The fair t' a friend divulges all her cares:
 If her own sex, 'tis ten to one she's lost,
 For women are by women ruin'd most,
 Or if to ours she opens all her grief,
 In hopes thro' counsel to find some relief,

The

The soothing sycophant, for his own end,
Gives good advice, but proves a treach'rous friend.

Be cautious wives, nor of such feuds complain,
Rather sustain the load of all your pain
You cannot mend it, but may make it worse,
And the slight ill may prove the greatest curse.

But this, you think, can never be your case,
Triumphant virtue does this fair one grace ;
Unbounded sweets of life with her you'll prove,
And revel in the truest joys of love.
Alas! my friend, I do not her distrust,
Whose conduct is so regularly just.
She, who her rules of life from scripture draws,
Can to suggestion never give a cause,
Yet tho' in her such great perfections meet,
Endow'd with virtues so profusely sweet ;

How

How hard's the lesson to declining years

To overcome the prejudice of fears!

Unless you're more than man, ev'n your own
(thoughts

Will turn her very virtues into faults.

Your greatest foe you in yourself will find,

And think her false, tho' ne'er so truly kind.

The wanton fair will out of envy strive

Intriguing opportunities to give,

And strenuously to level her will aim,

'Till like themselves they bring the virtuous
(dame.

For vice disgusted always at the pure,

Can no bright object in its fight endure.

Nor can ihe e'er be free, who is so fair,

From crowds of beaux, who study the belle air.

These to seduce her ev'ry art will try,

And sting you, causeless, with hot jealousy.

D

Timely

Timely consider whether you can bear,
Such forward gallant's whisper in her ear ?
The tap of snuff-box, and the gentle hawl
To this fine play, and Madam Tippet's ball ?
Like misers fearful of each puff that blows,
Lest they their darling mammon chance to lose,
Such fears you'll prove, nay, ev'n the very wind,
Gentle caressing, will perplex your mind,
Lest it should fan her kerchief in the air,
And leave her rising snowy bosom bare:
Being ever conscious of your own neglect,
For jealousy proceeds from some defect.

Oh ! do not me your enemy suppose,
Me, in whose breast the warmest friendship glows.
Who but a foe would a spectator stand,
And carelessly refuse his saving hand,
When to destruction he his friend perceives
Heedlessly running, nor assistance gives?
Believe

Believe me, you will me esteem the more
 When this hot fit of Dotage once is o'er.
 I know 'tis hard t'oppose another's will,
 And in their friendship to continue still.
 We hate the man that gives us good advice,
 And still persists the more in our caprice.
 Th' ungrateful world is such! and therefore few
 Or none, but friends the grating task pursue.
 Did I not know your noble soul disdains
 To herd with these, I'd spare myself the pains.
 No, sure I'd never suffer you to run,
 Could I prevent, you shou'd not be undone.

But after all, we'll grant your godlike mind
 Is by philosophy so well refin'd,
 You can your temper in that state command,
 And all th' attacks of jealousy withstand;
 Tho' o'er your head death points his barbed dart,
 Ready to plunge it in your aged heart.

We'll further grant you may the blessing see,
Tho' unexpected, of a progeny.
That solid comfort you can never share
Of bringing up your only son and heir.
The tender off-spring soon must be bereft
Of a good father, to the mother left,
Who young and gay a future choice may make,
That little care may of the infant take.
With partial fondness doating on his own,
How may your babe lament that you are gone?
Pining with grief, drop green into his grave,
Or live a life not much unlike a slave.
This rule, by instinct, the brute creatures hold,
Never to couple when they're growing old,
Lest death o'ertake 'em e'er the helpless race
Can for themselves provide. Such is your case.
But reason sure must over man preside:
Need he the brute creation for his guide?

O why

O why will you so obst'nately persist?

Th' unequal match, my dearest friend, desist.

Besides, already you have got an heir,

A son adopted, worthy of your care.

Let him indulge himself in nuptial joys;

But age shou'd cast away such am'rous toys:

Let youth with youth the species propagate

Believe me, Sir, for you 'tis full too late.

Let him make choice among the blooming fair,

Or seek him out a wife, with studious care,

Which both may well approve; so shall you see

Yourself reviv'd in his fair progeny.

See how the youth in silence mourns his fate,

Grieves more to lose an Uncle, than estate.

The tide of love and friendship must run low,

When we thro' various channels bid it flow.

Why did you teach his youthful hopes to raise?

Why seem t'ensure his life with happy days?

And

And all at once to gratify your flame,
Reduce him to contempt, pale want and shame.
When fortune ceases former smiles to wear,
It makes her frowns more terrible appear.
Weigh well this counsel for your good design'd,
And shake this fit of Dotage from your mind.
Thus will you cause his duty to encrease,
When for his sake you shun such happiness.
Your age's comfort he will daily prove,
Comforts which now you cannot reap from love.

When your dear brother on his death-bed lay,
And you the last kind office came to pay,
Still warm with life, you prest his dying hand,
Saw the youth present fix'd in sorrow stand;
Quite motionless surrounded with big grief,
Too big for tears t'a Ford the least relief,
You saw convulsive pangs his father seize,
Whose great concern wou'd not admit of ease;
Whose

Whose only care was for his only son,
 You eas'd that care, and took him as your own;
 Bereft of speech, he cast a wishful look
 On you, his comfort, and wou'd fain have spoke.
 ' Pleas'd with the promise he resign'd his breath,
 ' And calmly sunk into the arms of death.
 Can you forget? You cannot sure forget.
 Fresh in my mind, methinks I see it yet.
 Oh! the good man, repeated all the crowd,
 Whilst on you thousand blessings all bestow'd.
 Shall then a girl these solid joys erase,
 And all your former kindnessees deface?
 But oh! you love! you can't withdraw your heart,
 Life and the passion death alone can part.
 To banish love is difficult, I own,
 'When it has taken root and headstrong grown;
 But time and absence yet allay its force,
 The cause remov'd, th' effect must cease of course.

Think

Think what a glory it will be to gain,
The Maſt'ry of yourſelf; tho' great the pain,
The tryal hard; yet victory will be
Attended with ſincere felicity.
Pure-flowing joy will crown each happy day,
With pleaſures mix'd, without the leaſt allay.
More manly he, who can himſelf command,
Than him who conquers kingdoms with his hand.
Great *Philip's* victor ſon was more renown'd
For curbing this ſtrong paſſion within bound,
Who o'er himſelf a conqueſt e'er maintain'd,
Than for the glorious battles he had gain'd.
The *Persian* Captives, worthy to be lov'd,
The youth no more than lifeleſs ſtatutes mov'd.
Yet merrily he oft was wont to ſay
They were great Eye-ſores, but cou'd not betray.
Altho' a tide of youth flow'd thro' each vein,
Yet cou'd his temperance the tide refrain,

The

The captive Queen adorn'd with ev'ry grace
 A Hermit might inspire, nor her fair Race,
 Tho' then the greatest beauties of the age,
 Cou'd kindle in his breast an am'rous rage.
 So much the Effects of all their moving charms
 His Chastity o'erpowr'd, he shunn'd their arms.
 The Story of *Apelles*, when he drew
 The conqu'ror's mistress, naked to his view,
 Is known to all. With what a nobler mind
 He to th' enamour'd Artist her resign'd!
 What need I mention *Scipio*'s godlike heart,
 Who from the beauteous captive too cou'd part !
 But still a nobler instance may be brought
 (Whate'er may be by modern Coxcombs thought)
 To save *Antiochus*, the Prince's life,
Seleucus parted with his darling wife ;
 Tho' she had made him father of a son,
 And scarce a twelvemonth e'er their joys begun.

E

I car-

I care not if the story I relate,
Give but the hearing and with patience wait ;
Tho' tedious, yet 'tis worth your while to hear,
Unless my numbers shou'd displease your ear.
That youthful Prince, with flaming passion fir'd,
Stratonice, the charming Queen, desir'd.
Long did he struggle with his fate in vain,
Fruitless all Efforts to elude his pain.
Unhappy ! finding it was hard to prove
His big desires, and harder to remove,
He saw no cure for his sad hopeless state,
But that which on despair and death must wait.
Sad fatal choice ! he now resolv'd to die,
Which to affect, by feigning malady,
He thought to languish out his am'rous soul,
And nought his resolution cou'd controul ;
For the support of life refus'd all food,
And ev'ry med'cine offer'd for his good

Era-

Erasistratus, the Physician, found
 Love was his sickness, *Cupid* gave the wound ;
 But hard to find from whence the arrow came,
 And who was the bright object of his flame ;
 This to discover carefully he strove,
 Nor from his chamber wou'd he ever move.
 When any charming beauties of the court
 To visit the sick prince did e'er resort,
 He curiously th' emotions in his face
 Observ'd, and watch'd if any change shou'd raise,
 Which, well he knew, upon surprize display,
 And th' inward passions of the Soul betray.
 He found the presence of these Ladies wrought
 No alteration, nor disturb'd his thought ;
 But when *Stratonice* to visit came,
 H' observ'd the symptoms of a furious flame ;
 Silent he lay, nor from his posture stirr'd,
 His raging passion smothering ev'ry word,

A fiery blush wou'd mount into his face,
And his fix'd eyes on his step-mother gaze,
Then struck at once with a confused awe,
Those stolen, guilty, pleasing looks withdraw ;
His pulse disorder'd, high would beat his heart,
And a cold sweat wou'd seize on ev'ry part ;
Unable to support the raging fire,
Fall senseless, pale, as death he did desire.

From these true symptoms the physician knew
That for *Stratonice* his passion grew ;
And that none cou'd his resolution move
To perish rather than reveal his love.
He plainly saw, if he did not apply
To his disease the only remedy,
The passion soon upon his life wou'd prey ;
Trembling to think how he shou'd it display ;

But

But yet confid'ring that *Selencus*, mind
 Was to the prince extraordinary kind;
 And once the King enquiring of his state,
 He put on all his courage to relate.
 Love's his disease, he said, but yet, most sure,
 For his disease none can afford a cure;
 Because impossible for the royal boy
 The object of his passion to enjoy,
 And equally impossible to live,
 Without the fates to him that object give.
 The King at this account surprized grew,
 Nor wou'd be satisfy'd, until he knew
 How his son's passion cou'd not have a cure?
 What nymph so coy which he cou'd not procure?
 Why, Sir, *Erasistratus* then replies,
 Because 'tis for my dearest wife he dies.

How!

How! said the king, *Erasistratus* dear,
Dost thou no kindness to thy Sov'reign bear?
Wilt thou refuse my son and heir to save,
When he no other hopes of life can have?
Nay then, the wise Physician, as before
Reply'd, since you're his father, on that score
You ought the greatest tenderness to bear
To prince *Antiochus*, your son and heir.
That counsel which you give, pray wou'd you take,
If now the prince for fair *Strat'nice's* sake
Did thus to love so desp'rately encline,
Wou'd you your interest in her resign?
Seleucus then return'd, ah my dear friend!
I'd surely take th' advice which I commend.
May some kind God upon that issue place
The safety of this darling of my Race,
My life, my Empire I'd resign this hour,
And joy to have the gift within my pow'r;

And

And what's more worth than all, my tender wife,
To save the prince *Antiochus* his life.

With that a torrent of paternal tears
Bedew'd his aged cheeks, his son he fears.

Erasistratus joyfully perceiv'd

How his discourse the aged monarch griev'd,

Seizing his hand, said he, I comfort bring,

Since you're a husband, father and a king,

You in this case the best physician are,

And may preserve his life and ease his care ;

If you *Stratonice* to him release,

Antiochus you'll cure of his disease.

Wonderful tryal ! Daggers to his heart !

Yet he resolv'd with his dear queen to part.

Seleucus being with strongest virtue arm'd,

Wou'd now no longer be with beauty charm'd ;

Whilst yet his breast with warmest passion glow'd,

He on the Prince *Stratonice* bestow'd ;

Us'd

Us'd ev'ry argument for her consent,
Prevail'd, and blest *Anti'chus* with content.

Let these examples, Sir, upon you move ;
Drive from your breast this fit of doting love ;
Restrain your passions, and we shall, in thee,
Seleucus, Scipio, Alexander see.

F I N I S.



